

The Sunday School

LESSON FOR JANUARY 23

BY THE EDITOR

The Beatitudes.—Matthew 5:1-12.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Ye are the light of the world.—Matthew 5:14.

LESSON THOUGHT.—The blessedness of the kingdom of God is to be found, not in our material possessions, but in life and character.

Home Readings

The Beatitudes. Matt. 5:1-12.
A guiding light. Matt. 5:13-20.
Perfection of love. Matt. 5:38-48.
Blessings in disguise. Luke 6:20-28.
Blessings of obedience. Ps. 119:1-6.
Motive for love. I John 4:4-12.
Walking in light. I John 2:1-11.

Introductory Notes

The gospel according to Matthew has, as we have repeatedly noted, a logical but not a chronological arrangement. The first four chapters form an introduction, and from the fifth chapter until the twenty-fifth the subject of the book is the teachings of Jesus, with a brief account of his works. As an example of the Savior's formal discourses we have presented to us the Sermon on the Mount, the longest address in the New Testament. If the gospel of Matthew were the only record we might suppose that this discourse was given at the opening of the Savior's public life, but a comparison with Mark and Luke shows that it was near the middle of the Galilean ministry, when the largest crowds were following Jesus, while the people were eager to hear him and were still hoping for a temporal kingdom, and before his spiritual teachings had diminished his popularity. The Sermon on the Mount was addressed primarily to the apostles, but was heard also by the multitudes. It contains a statement of the principles of the new covenant, the laws of the kingdom of God. But it was only preliminary to the higher teachings of salvation thro the blood of the Lamb which was to be given to the apostles, and by them, after the glorification of Christ, to the world.—*Sel.*

Meaning of the Text

1, 2. *The multitude.* He had spent the whole night in prayer. In the morning he found the people hungry for instruction. Luke 6:12-19. *Mountain.* Likely a well known place. The people were in the plain. Luke 6:17. Jesus went up to a higher point from which he could more easily be heard. *Was set.* Jewish teachers usually sat while speaking. *Disciples came.* The newly chosen twelve came close to him. The others were within hearing but farther away. *Opened his mouth.* Shows that he was about to say something very important. Many open their mouth but say nothing worth hearing.

3. *Blessed.* A permanent state of felicity or blessedness. It means more than mere happiness. The word is in the plural and shows the manifold blessednesses. *Poor in*

spirit. Not necessarily poor in worldly goods but those of humble mind and lowly heart, the opposite of the spiritual proud, the self-righteous. *Kingdom of heaven.* They are such as are in the kingdom; they possess the spirit of those who make up the kingdom.

4. *Mourn.* Who are penitent, who mourn for their sins. II Cor. 7:10. It may also mean those who are in suffering and distress. Rom. 5:3-5; Heb. 12:11. *Comforted.* That which comes with divine forgiveness, pardon and peace, restored communion with God. It may also mean that God's comfort is such a blessed thing that it far more than compensates for the pain and suffering. Isa. 61:2; John 16:20; Rom. 8:18. The word literally means, coming to one's side for aid, strength, etc.

5. *The meek.* The gentle, not easily provoked, those who are of a forbearing and forgiving spirit. I Cor. 6:7; Rom. 12:19; I Peter 2:19, 22. *Inherit the earth.* The words are taken from Psalm 37:11. It is true in more than one sense. The earth is the Lord's and his children have a better title to it than the wicked. They are better cared for than those who do not trust God. Again, the meek, who have the peace of God in the heart, get more real joy and good out of this world than others. The complete fulfillment of the promise will be the new earth.

6. *Hunger and thirst.* Those who have an intense desire, not for worldly things, but for the higher needs of the soul, for God and holiness. *Filled.* Here is the difference: Hunger for fame and honor will never find satisfaction, but spiritual hunger will find complete satisfaction in Christ.

7. *Merciful.* Those who are pitiful and sympathize with the needy, and lend a helping hand in relieving their distresses. The reward of such is that they shall *obtain mercy.* It is the law of sowing and reaping. Sow mercy, reap mercy.

8. *Pure in heart.* The most beautiful of all the beatitudes. Those who are pure in thought, in word, in deed, in desires and in affections. The reward of such is that they shall *see God.* One that was impure could not see God, he would die. "Without holiness no man shall see God." In this world the pure in heart shall see of the beauty of God, and in the world to come enjoy him forever, seeing him face to face.

9. *Peacemakers.* Those who make an effort to heal dissensions, who instead of stirring up strife, help to reconcile men who are at variance. They are like the children of God, because God is a God of peace.

The Lesson Applied

1. *Blessed.* So opens the first Psalm, and so opens the Sermon on the Mount. What a word this is! It means far more than mere happiness. "The Christian word blessed is full of the light of heaven." Blessed is the result of an inward state of heart and soul that is not dependent on the happenings of life. The truly blessed man is not disturbed by anything outward. Whatever may happen in the external world, he is

blessed still, for the root of his blessedness is in the soul where no outward persecution can touch it. Oh, for the blessedness that is in Jesus Christ. The really blessed are those of whom it can be said as Paul said of the believer, "There is therefore now no condemnation in them that are in Christ Jesus." They are free from the disturbances of this life, they are hid in Jesus Christ, and in him is peace and joy and rest.

2. *Christ and the World.* Contrast the world's idea and Christ's idea of blessedness. How different! Did you ever know the world to call the poor in spirit blessed? What does it say? Blessed is that man who is rich, who has much of this world's goods, who is not in want, who owns farms, and railroad stock, who has reached the top of the ladder in earthly fame, in honor and greatness, who holds high office, who rules over others, and who knows no want. Write out the world's beatitudes and see what you have. But now look at Christ's beatitudes. Blessed are the pure in heart, the meek, the merciful, the persecuted, etc. The world never thinks of calling such blessed.

3. *Rewards.* Whatever we may say about rewards, one thing is certain, the Bible encourages us with holding up before us the blessed rewards of those who are faithful. In these beatitudes are found eight statements of facts and each one has its promise or reward. The reward of heart purity is that we shall see God. The merciful shall obtain mercy, and so on. God does not ask us to love and serve him without the encouragement of the richest promises. These promises are an inspiration to the child of God. When the things of this life have passed away, the Christian has the promise of a home in heaven.

To Make You Think

1. To whom was the Sermon on the Mount delivered, to the disciples or the multitude? 2. What is meant by the word "blessed?" 3. In what way does Christ's idea of blessedness differ from that of the world? 4. Is the Sermon on the Mount a good creed for the Christian? 5. Does it say anything about Christ as the center of Christian system? 6. Does it say anything about the doctrine of the atonement? 7. About sin and redemption? 8. Is there anything about the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit? 9. Is there anything about the new birth, the Redeemer, the cross, the tomb, the risen life, the ascension, etc.? 10. Which to you is the most beautiful of the beatitudes? 11. Which the easiest to attain? 12. Which the most difficult to attain? 13. In all these beatitudes what is made the basis of blessedness? 14. Does it depend on what we have and do or on what we are?

Thoughts for Young People

The Seven Blessings of the Gospel.

1. *The Gospel brings to men a citizenship in the kingdom of heaven.* The proudest boast of a man in the ancient time was, "I am a Roman citizen;" in modern times, "I